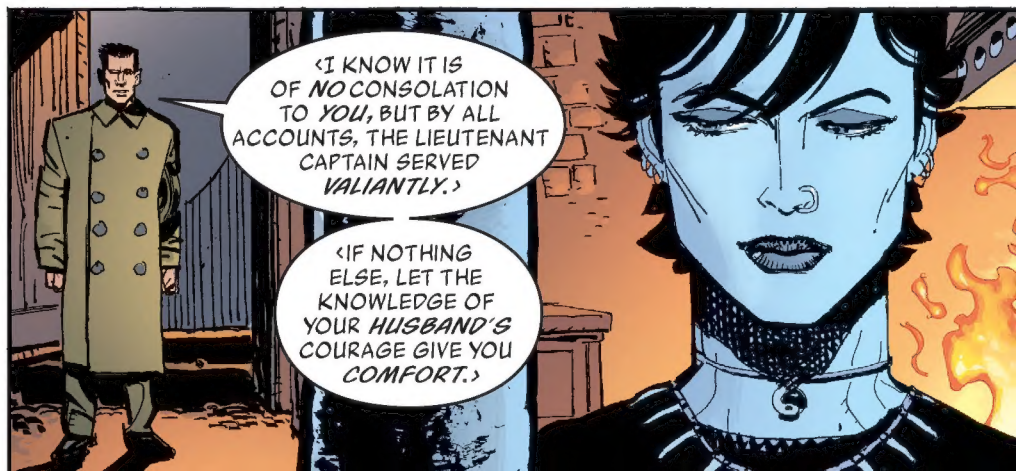


LAST YEAR.





«MY...
HUSBAND?»

«THE
LIEUTENANT
CAPTAIN,
YES.»



«IT MEANS
NOTHING TO YOU
NOW, I'M SURE, BUT YOUR
GRIEF WILL PASS
WITH TIME.»

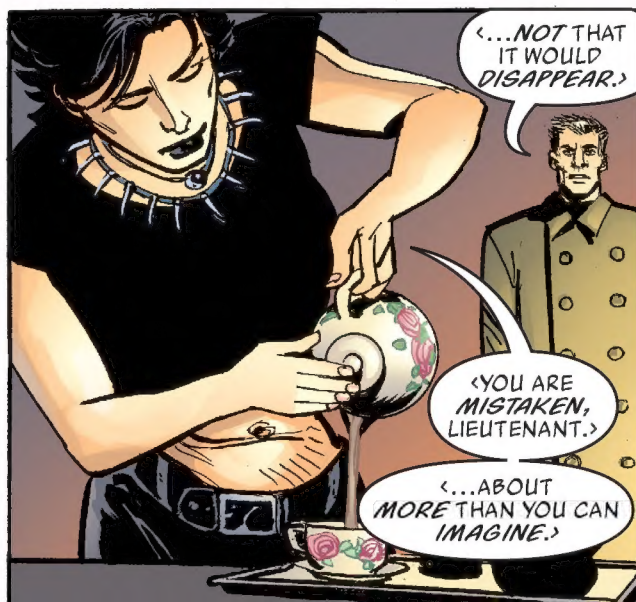
«GRIEF.»

«YES.»



«IF ONE LIVES
LONG ENOUGH,
ONE CAN COME TO
FEEL NOTHING
AT ALL.»

«I FEAR I HAVE
MISSPOKEN, MADAME.
WHAT I MEANT TO SAY WAS
SIMPLY THAT THE PAIN OF
LOSING YOUR HUSBAND
WILL DIMINISH...»



«...NOT THAT
IT WOULD
DISAPPEAR.»

«YOU ARE
MISTAKEN,
LIEUTENANT.»

«...ABOUT
MORE THAN YOU CAN
IMAGINE.»



«VASILY
VASILIEVICH
ARKETOV WAS
NOT MY
HUSBAND.»



«PLEASE ACCEPT MY APOLOGIES. YOU WERE LISTED IN HIS FILE AS HIS ONLY LIVING RELATION...»



«HE WAS NOT MY BROTHER.»

«...I NATURALLY ASSUMED YOU WERE MARRIED, AND NOT SIBLINGS.»

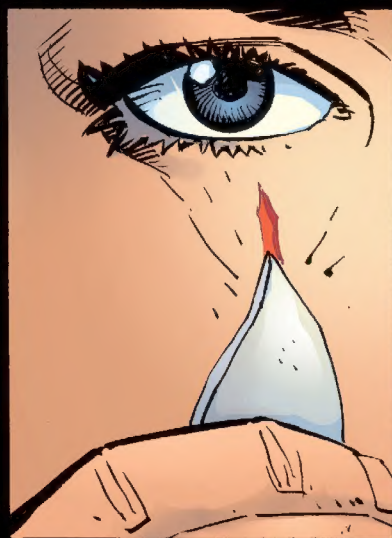
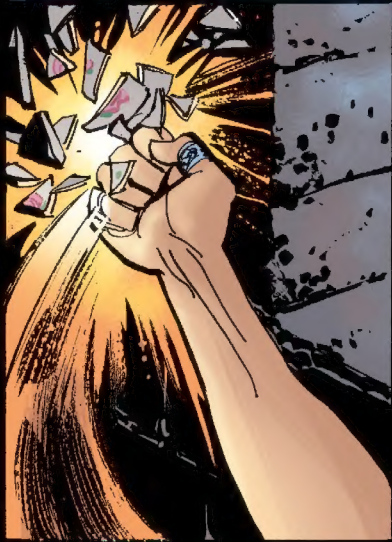


«HE WAS MY GREAT GRANDSON.»

«HE WAS MY LAST DESCENDANT.»



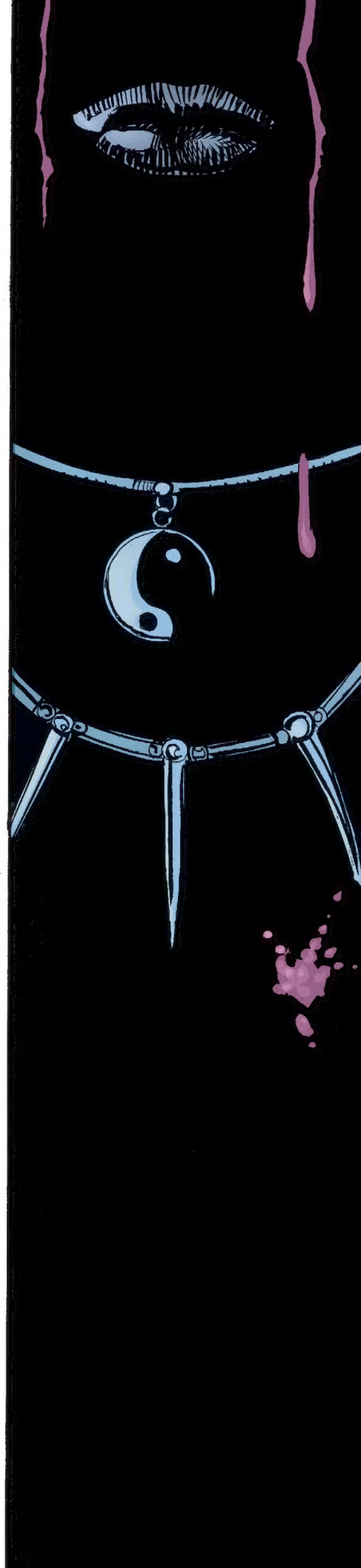
«THANK YOU FOR YOUR VISIT.»



«HE'S GONE,
MISTRESS.»

«IS THERE
ANYTHING
MORE I CAN DO
FOR YOU?»

«CAN YOU
GIVE ME MY
TEARS
AGAIN?»



I can't
remember
my mother.

The mind betrays
emotion. What
the head knows, the
heart forgets.

I live surrounded
by the artifacts
of tragedy, the
idolatry of my
worship.

I sleep in a
replica of my
parents' bed,
on fine linen
purchased
before I
was born...

...their eyes follow me
wherever I step in this
old house, observing
me from salvaged
paintings and
recovered photo-
graphs.

But it is only
intellect
keeping them
alive, now.

I can't remember
them anymore. Not
really. Not
honestly.

And I am
afraid...

...I don't feel it
anymore...

Twenty-five
years...

...my parents
murdered in
front of my
eyes...

...the wet
rattle of my
father's dying
breath...

...the heavy emptiness
invading my mother's
dilating eyes...

...So
long
ago.

Too long ago...

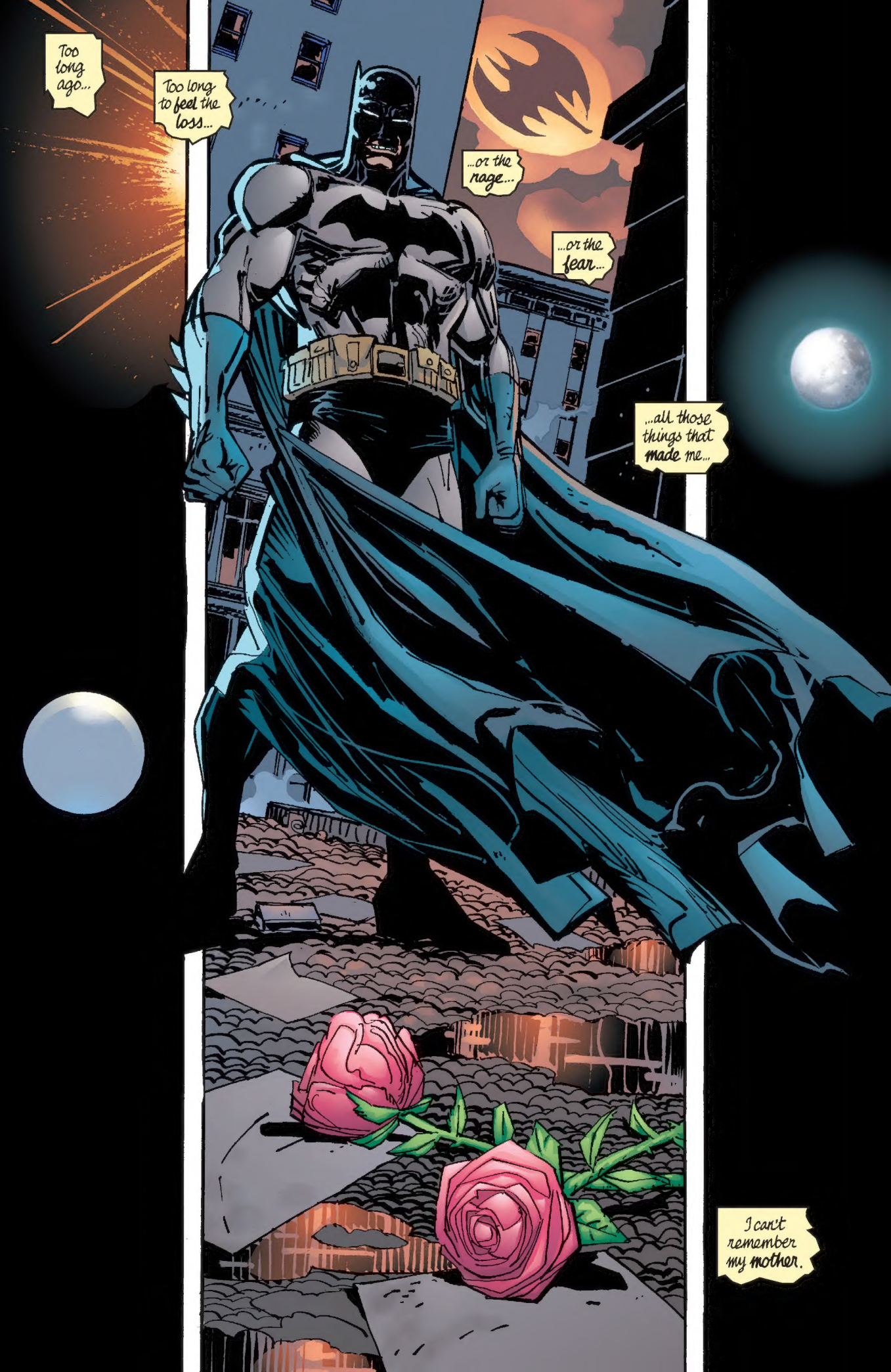
Too long to feel the loss...

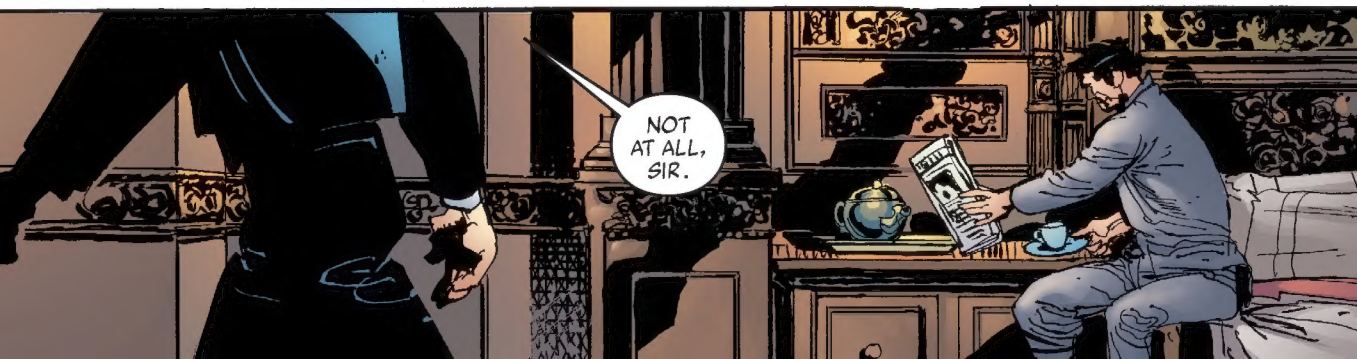
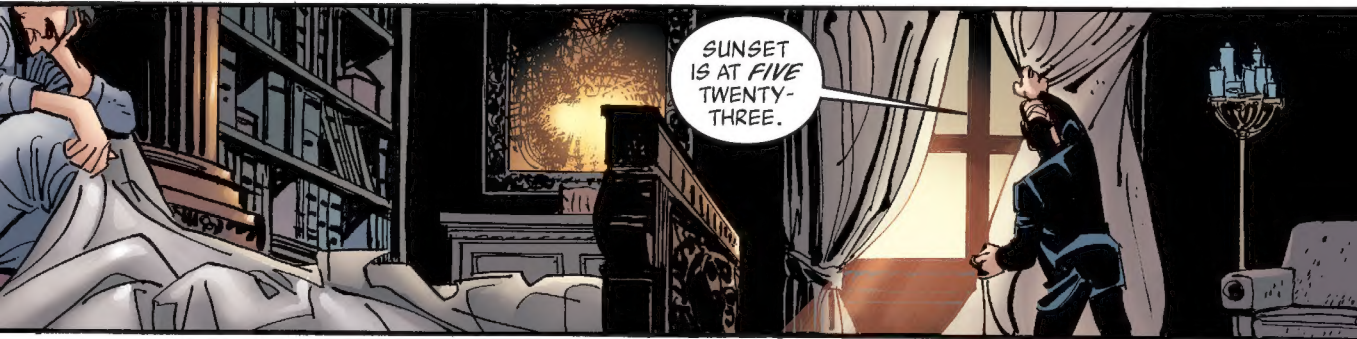
...or the rage...

...or the fear...

...all those things that made me...

I can't remember my mother.







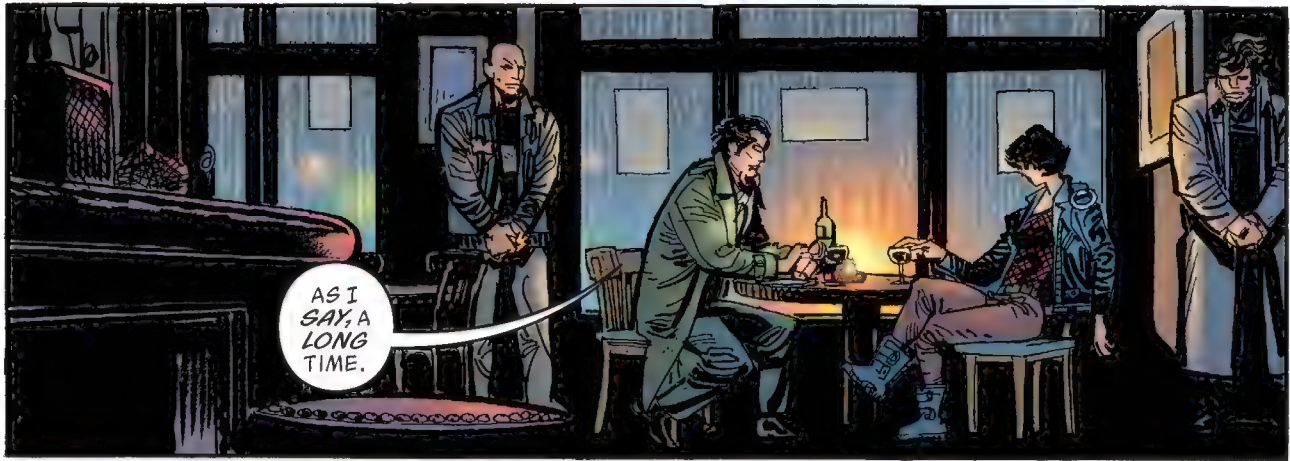


PARIS. TWO YEARS AGO.

I AM GRATEFUL YOU AGREED TO MEET ME.

IT HAS BEEN...A LONG TIME.

SIXTY YEARS, ALMOST TO THE DAY.



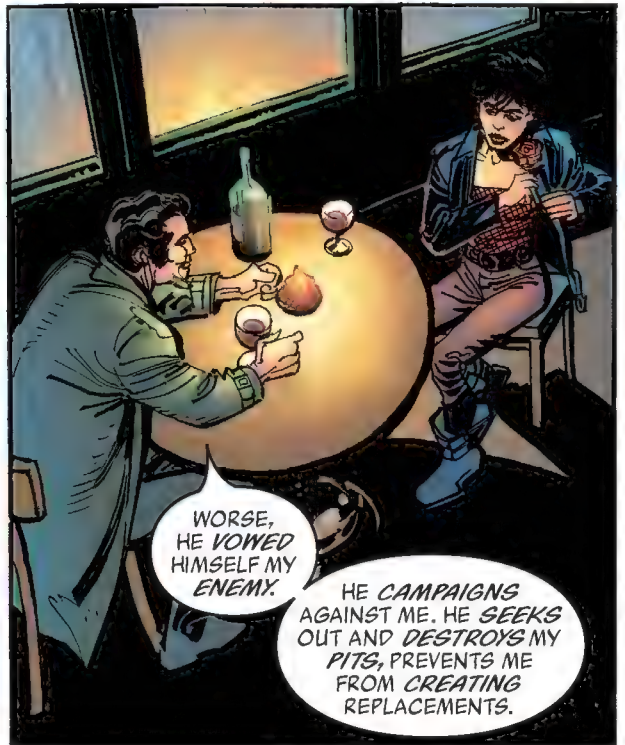
AS I SAY, A LONG TIME.



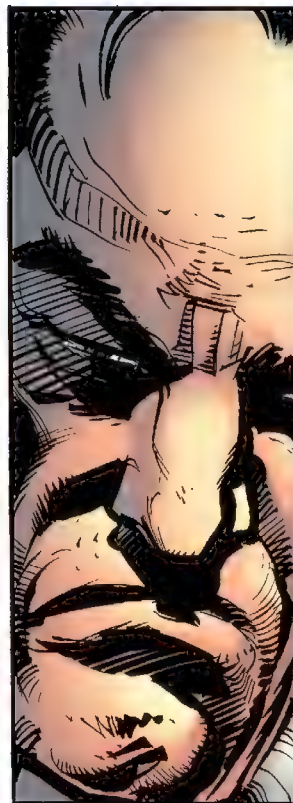
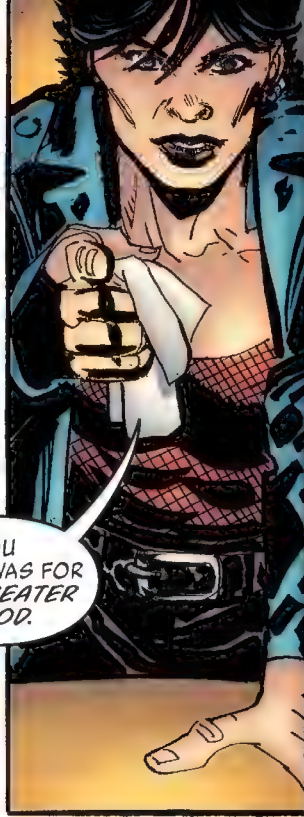
VERY WELL.

I HAVE SHARED THE SECRET OF THE PIT WITH ONLY A HANDFUL OF OTHERS.

THERE IS A MAN IN AMERICA, IN GOTHAM, WHO KNOWS OF THE LAZARUS PIT.





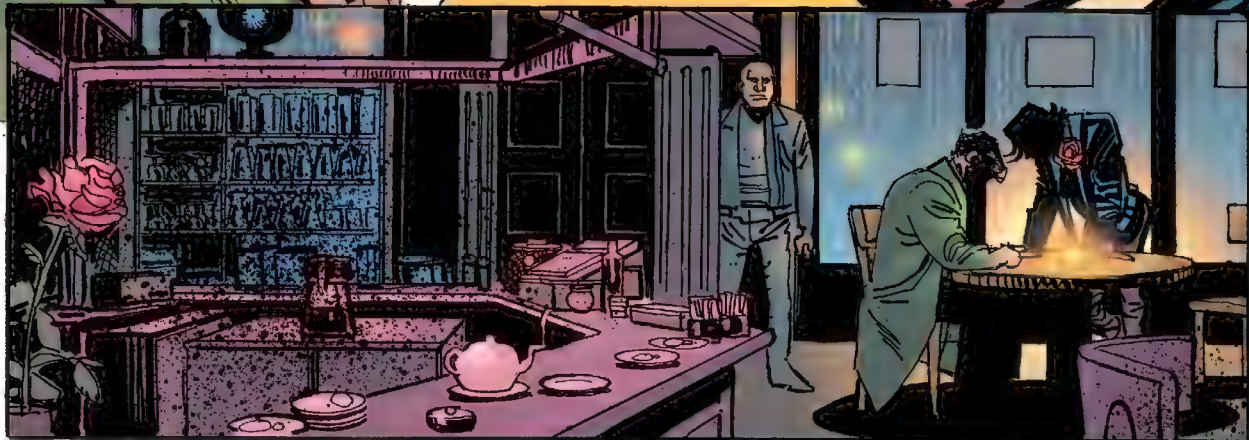






YOUR MOTHER WOULD NOT RECOGNIZE YOU.

WORSE, SHE WOULD CALL YOUR REFUSAL OF ME BOTH *BASE* AND *VILE*!



MY MOTHER WOULD HAVE SAID I ACTED FOR THE GREATER GOOD.



THAT YOU WOULD PUT THE WORDS *BASE* AND *VILE* IN THE SAME BREATH AS HER NAME IS UNFORGIVABLE.



THANK YOU FOR A LOVELY LUNCH.



Alfred...

WAYNE
BOTANICAL
GARDENS

...Alfred is like strong
medicine prescribed
by a doctor you
don't like, but
have to trust.

Undoubtedly
good for me,
but with a
very bitter
taste.

The date
is the easy
thing to
remember.

It's factual, its
only meaning
the one which I
invest in it.

I can remember
the date.

It's the
intangibles
that I have
forgotten.

Emotions
that seem
now to
belong to
someone
else.

Feelings
that have
faded...

...away...



UBU.

I DON'T LIKE--

--BEING WATCHED--

--AT THE BEST OF TIMES...

...BUT SPYING ON ME TONIGHT IS BEYOND INSULTING.

I WAS NOT SENT TO FIGHT YOU, DETECTIVE.



THEN YOU'RE ABOUT TO GET A LOT OF HURT.



I BEAR YOU A MESSAGE FROM THE DEMON'S HEAD.

HE SENDS GREETINGS AND WELL-WISHES, AND DESIRES A MEETING TO CONVERSE.

ABOUT?



I HAVE NO IDEA. THE DEMON'S HEAD KEEPS HIS OWN COUNSEL.

THAT HE WOULD SHARE IT WITH YOU IS A GREAT HONOR.

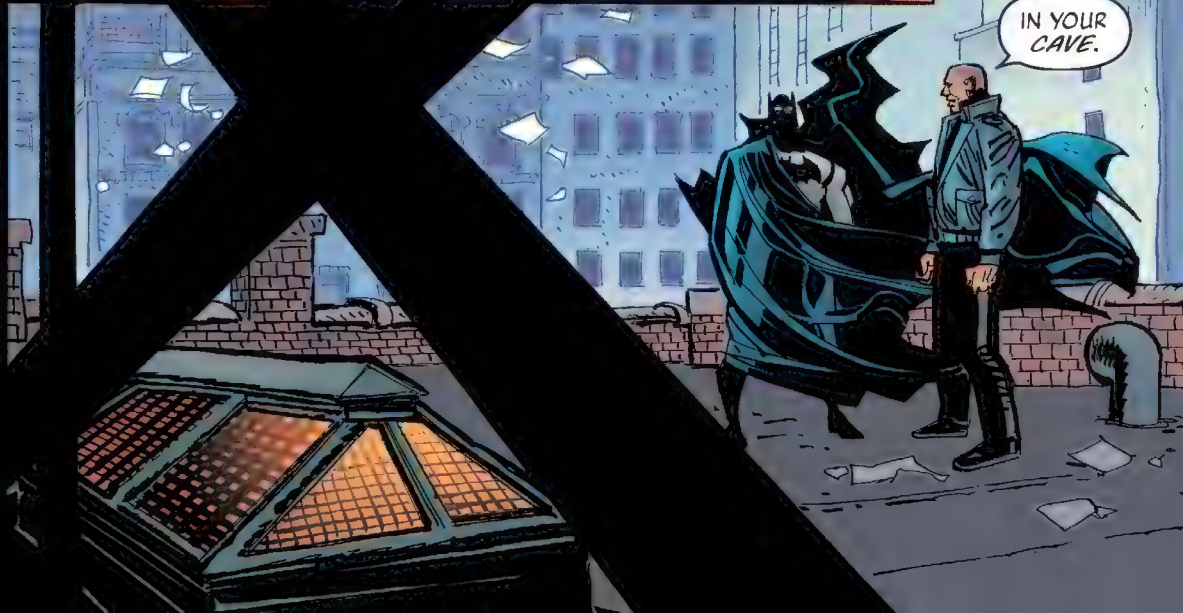


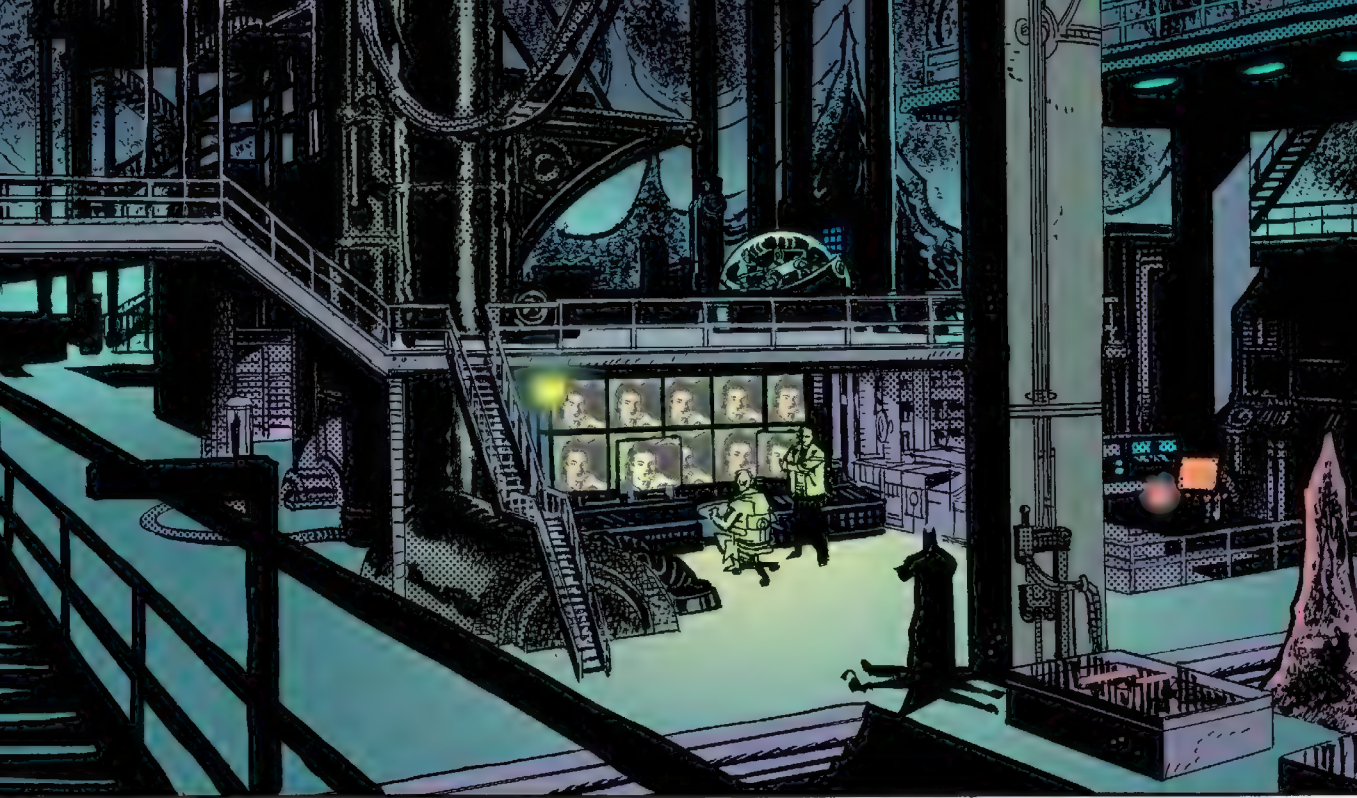
SURE IT IS.

WHERE AND WHEN?

HE AWAITS YOU EVEN AS WE SPEAK.

IN YOUR CAVE.





MY DAUGHTER
IS BEAUTIFUL...



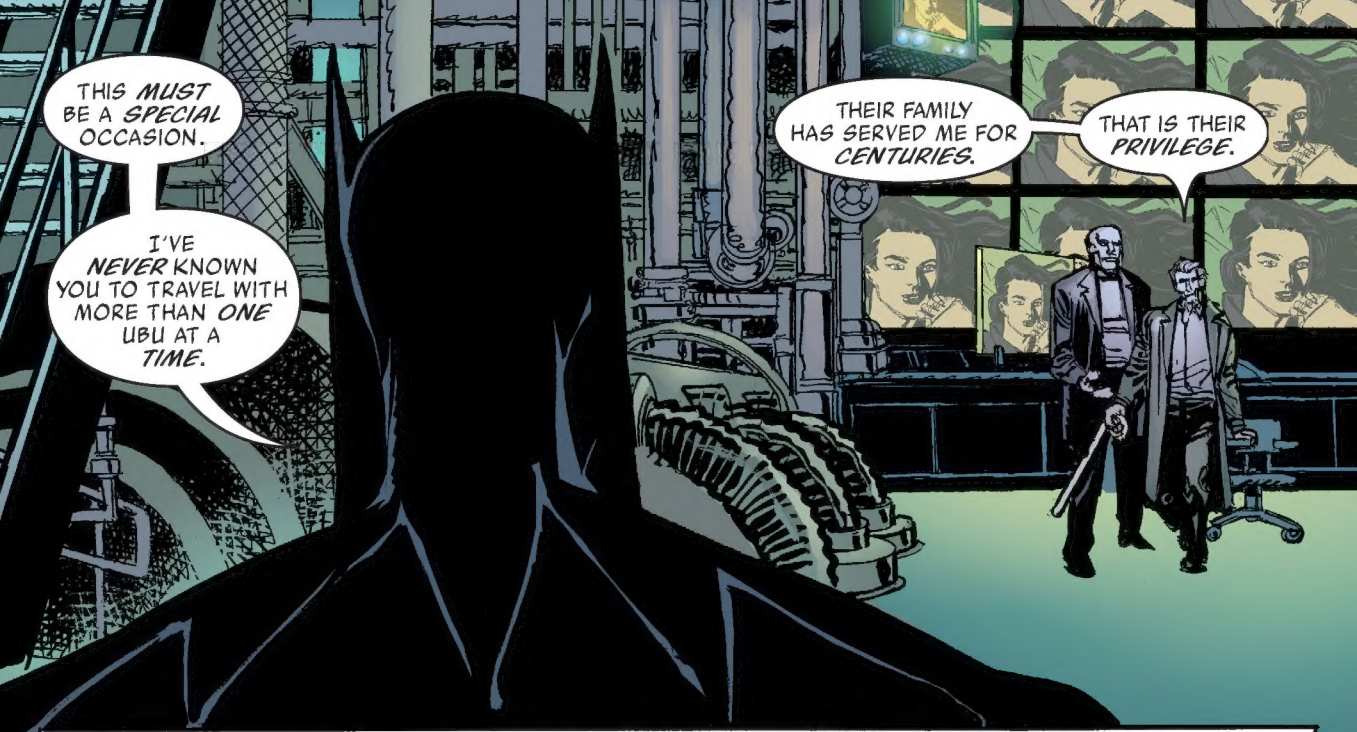
...I'M SURE
YOU AGREE,
DETECTIVE.

YOU SHOULD DO
SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR
ENCRYPTION.

AND MY
SECURITY.

YES, THAT
ALSO.

UBU,
HELP ME
UP.

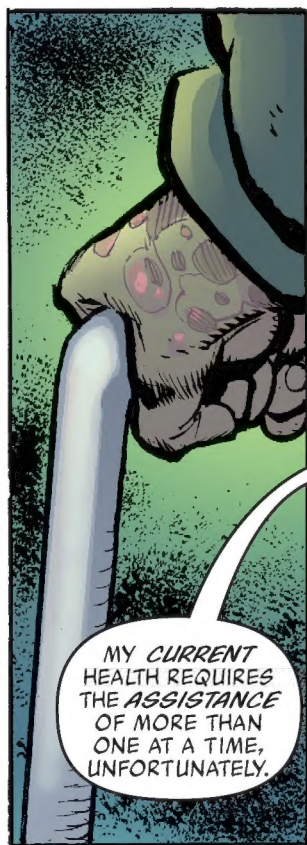


THIS *MUST*
BE A *SPECIAL*
OCCASION.

I'VE
NEVER KNOWN
YOU TO TRAVEL WITH
MORE THAN *ONE*
UBU AT A
TIME.

THEIR FAMILY
HAS SERVED ME FOR
CENTURIES.

THAT IS THEIR
PRIVILEGE.



WHAT DO YOU WANT?



From Baaldur, with love...

GLORITH





no. **one**

October 2003

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Rucka & Janson

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DEATH AND THE MAIDENS

